



International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements
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The value of play MISSION STATEMENT

Introduction

FIMCAP, a Catholic, intercontinental, umbrella youth organisation, acknowledges that play is essential in the lives of children, youngsters and adults. It is important for children, youngsters and adults to play. This is supported by article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹. The CRC even goes further, saying that playing is a basic right for all children.

- 1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*
- 2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

But we need to remember that the right to play is not the only children's right that needs to be met. Children also have the right to be loved and cared for, to be healthy and fulfilled. They have the right to education, food, shelter and safety. If these fundamental needs are met, children can play.

The XXVI General Assembly discussed the value of play, and the expertise of youth movements from around the world put us in the unique position to make sure that the right to play is implemented.

What is play?

When we talk about *games*, we mean an activity that follows set rules and might have a clear leader. A game is an organized activity, also called "directed play". *Playing*, on the other hand, is free of rules, or the rules develop while playing. This is also called "non-directed play". When we talk about "play" in this mission statement, both forms are included.

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

Play is important for the holistic development of children. They experience many values, such as peace, responsibility, equality, respect, justice and solidarity, which are important for FIMCAP and society. Children and youth also learn and practise many useful skills, such as communicating, leading, sharing, critical thinking, and many more.

We are also convinced that playing just for the sake of playing and having fun is valuable for children and youth. Play brings children, youth and adults together, no matter their gender, creed, age, and nationality or political view. Playing is a way of life.

Youth movements can provide space and time where children can just have fun and play carefree. They can explore themselves and their surroundings, without pressure to learn or achieve something.

Play does not only have a value for the individual, it also helps the development of society. If children and youth learn how to be creative and imaginative, they will be capable of finding new, creative solutions. Children are the leaders of tomorrow. Youth movements empower them to take responsibility from a young age. Youth movements can also contribute to social cohesion. When children and youth play, they interact with others. Play is the best and fun way to achieve unity in the community.

FIMCAP's member organisations put play in the centre of their activities. Play can be a purpose in itself, it can also be a way to transmit a message or help the children and youth to discover and learn. Playing is also fun and imaginative. There are endless ways to express an idea through play. Leaders should be creative, innovative, able to improvise, and they need to explore all options available, not only while preparing but also during the game. An evaluation of the game can help to improve it. Playing must take the needs of the group and the individual players into account, and respect the personal boundaries of the players. It should take place in safe conditions and respect the values of the member organization and FIMCAP.

Society

In societies all over the world, time and space to play is becoming more and more limited. Reasons include privatisation and increased restriction of public space, city planning, less free time and technological changes. FIMCAP demands that this issue is addressed as a priority.

Family

Family is the basic unit of the society, it is the first safe place where children play and explore playing. Children bring their experiences from home into society, so when they step out of the comfort of their homes, they need to feel it is ok to play. Youth movements can provide opportunities to play for children who do not have the opportunity to play at home.

Youth movements are interested in the families and the parents, their view on play and in establishing a good relationship with them.

Church

As Pope Francis says in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, “Youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind. That is why an institution as ancient as the Church can experience renewal and a return to youth at different points in her age-old history.

*Young people can help keep [the Church] young. They can stop her from becoming corrupt; they can keep her moving forward, prevent her from being proud and sectarian, help her to be poorer and to bear better witness, to take the side of the poor and the outcast, to fight for justice and humbly to let herself be challenged. Young people can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to ‘rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments’”.*²

Jesus Christ’s message is to make the world a better place for all human beings. FIMCAP members, as part of the Church, are advocates for the children’s right to play. We can assist the Church to discover the power of play, so that play can empower them and make them become part of the community.

FIMCAP wants to work in partnership with the Church to convince the rest of society about the value of play. By providing us with the necessary means, the Church helps us to achieve this goal.

Local communities

Local communities play a vital role in shaping the personality of children and youth. While many local communities acknowledge the value of play through spaces and equipment, there are others where children and youth struggle to find space to play. Youth movements can assist those communities to find and shape spaces for children and youth to come together to play, be carefree and have fun in their neighbourhoods. By providing us with the necessary means, the local communities help us to achieve this goal.

School

Schools are very often a second home for children and youth, where they learn and grow. Youth movements can assist schools in creating and shaping a space for children to play. A good relationship between the school and the youth movement can facilitate this process.

Conclusion

FIMCAP acknowledges the value of play. We must raise awareness about the value of play, and promote the acceptance of play.

FIMCAP demands decision makers to provide adequate, safe, inclusive and accessible play spaces for children, youth, and adults of any gender, ethnic or economical background, abilities, affiliation and other kind of diversities.

FIMCAP will do everything in its power to ensure that play is not politicised or commercialised.

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html

FIMCAP recommends preserving and promoting the value of play in all educational processes, including formal, non-formal and informal education.

FIMCAP encourages young people to be an active part of the decision making and the policy processes in general, and particularly on matters regarding the value of play.